

BREAST CANCER SCREENING IN THE MILITARY HEALTH SYSTEM (MHS)

A National Quality Management Program Special Study

“Breast cancer screening rates varied significantly by Military Service, ranging from 77 percent for women enrolled to Army Military Treatment Facilities (MTFs) to 81 percent for women enrolled to Navy MTFs, and 83 percent for women enrolled to Air Force MTFs.”

Why study Breast Cancer Screening?

An estimated 192,200 new cases of breast cancer will be diagnosed among women in 2001, and 40,200 women will die of this disease (CDC, 2001). Numerous studies have reported a reduction in breast cancer mortality associated with mammography (CDC, 2001; Tabor et al 2001; Banks et al 2001).

As a result of the effectiveness of mammography, the United States Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) recommends mammography every one to two years for women aged 40 and older and annually for women over age 50 (AHRQ, 2000). Access to this testing is provided to female MHS beneficiaries as a TRICARE Standard and Prime Clinical Preventive Services benefit (TRICARE Management Activity (TMA), 2002). In November 2001, the Department of Defense (DoD) and Veterans Health Administration (VHA) developed a guideline for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Indicators that included mammography for breast cancer screening.

Efforts to examine breast cancer screening rates are ongoing at the DoD. For example, a Fiscal Year (FY) 2001 National Quality Management Program (NQMP) study examined mammography rates for the population of women ages 52 through 69 enrolled to an MTF as of March 2001 (Birch & Davis, 2001). The study noted mammography rates of 70 percent for women enrolled to an MTF, 70 percent for Non-Active Duty (NAD) enrollees, and 74 percent for Active Duty (AD) enrollees.

This NQMP study refines estimates of breast cancer screening and answers the following questions:

1. What is the breast cancer screening rate for women continuously enrolled to an MTF? Does the breast cancer screening rate vary by enrollment site: All MTFs, TRICARE Region, Military Service, and Service Intermediate Command?
2. What is the breast cancer screening rate for TRICARE beneficiaries continuously enrolled to Network providers?
3. What is the breast cancer screening rate for all beneficiaries eligible for care in the MHS?

What was the Methodology?

The study population consisted of women ages 52 through 69 between April 1, 2001, and March 31, 2002. Mammography data were examined for the period April 1, 2000 through March 31, 2002.

The metrics developed and examined in this study include:

- MTF enrollees continuously enrolled—This measure used the Health Plan Employer and Information Set (HEDIS) 2002 Technical Specifications for Breast Cancer Screening. The specifications were implemented as written and no modifications were made. This measure evaluated the percentage of women ages 52 through 69 continuously enrolled in TRICARE Prime to an MTF who had a mammogram during the two-year observation period.
- Network enrollees continuously enrolled—This measure used a modified HEDIS methodology. The numerator included administrative radiology test data for mammography as an indicator



for breast cancer screening. This measure evaluated the percentage of women ages 52 through 69 continuously enrolled in TRICARE Prime to the Network who had a mammogram during the two-year observation period.

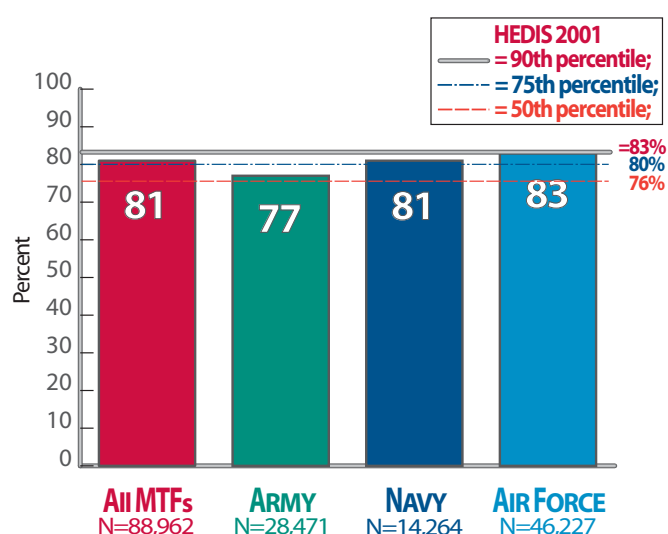
- All TRICARE eligible—This measure evaluated the percentage of women ages 52 through 69 who were eligible for care in the MHS and who had one or more mammograms during the two-year observation period.

Testing rates were benchmarked against HEDIS 2001 mammography rates and, when appropriate, the Healthy People (HP) 2010 goal.

What were the Results

Mammography rates varied significantly by Military Service, ranging from 77 percent for women enrolled to Army MTFs to 81 percent for women enrolled to Navy MTFs, and 83 percent for women enrolled to Air Force MTFs (Figure 1). All rates exceeded the HEDIS 2001 50th percentile rate of 76 percent for mammograms. The Air Force mammography rate met the HEDIS 2001 90th percentile rate of 83 percent for mammograms.

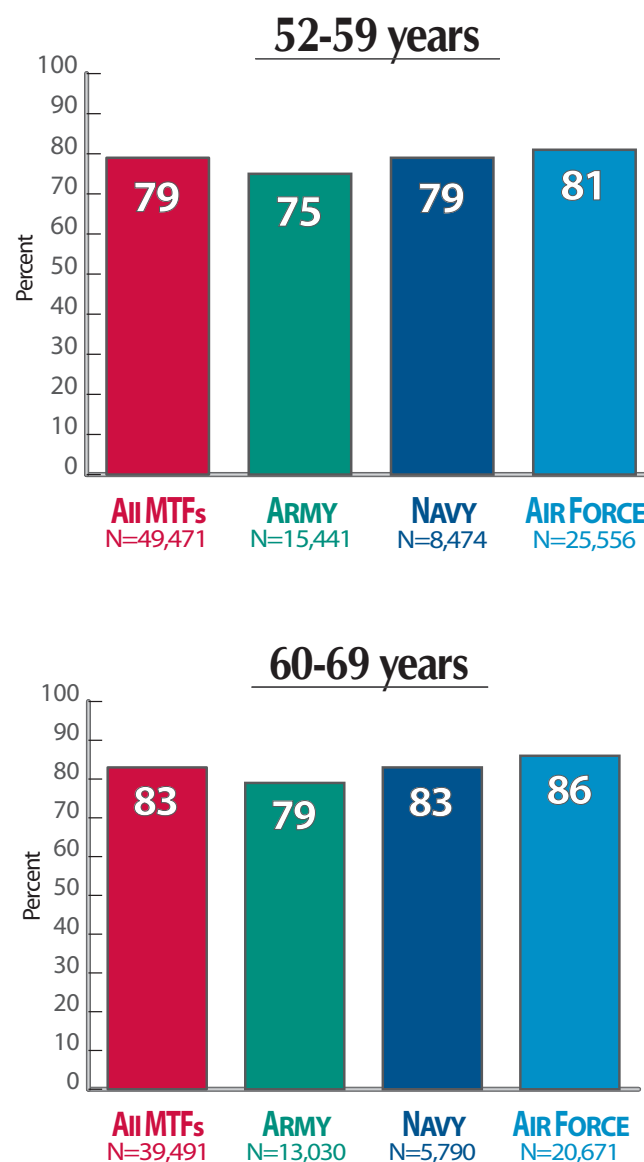
Figure 1: Mammography Rates, by Military Service Enrollment



Military Service mammogram rates were also examined by age (Figure 2). Across Services, mammography rates were higher among cohort members ages

60 through 69 than they were among cohort members ages 52 through 59.

Figure 2: Mammography Rates, by Military Service Enrollment and Age Group



Mammography rates for women continuously enrolled to an MTF were compared with mammography rates for women continuously enrolled in the Network. Table 1 provides the results of this examination. The following results were noted for continuously enrolled women:

- Mammography rates for women continuously enrolled to an MTF (81 percent) were higher in comparison to women continuously enrolled to Network providers (74 percent).

- The overall rates for continuously enrolled women (both enrolled to an MTF and enrolled to the Network) were comparable to rates reported by managed care organizations in HEDIS. Neither rate met or exceeded the HEDIS 2001 90th percentile rate of 83 percent.

Mammography rates for all women eligible for care in the MHS were also examined.

- In comparison to women with continuous enrollment, the mammography rate of all women eligible for MHS care was low at 31 percent. This rate was lower than the HP 2010 goal of 70 percent.

Table1: Mammography Rates for all Cohorts at MHS Level

Enrollment Status	Overall Ages 52-69 years		Ages 52-69 years		Ages 60-69	
	N	%	N	%	\	%
MTF enrollees Continuously Enrolled	88,962	81	49,471	79	39,491	83
Network Enrollees Continuously Enrolled	35,087	74	19,900	72	15,187	76
All TRICARE Eligible	931,912	31	403,361	34	528,551	33

Conclusions and Recommendations

This FY 2002 study provided a second, more precise examination of breast cancer screening rate for the entire MHS. Based on study data, several recommendations should be considered:

- Continuing to monitor mammography rates at all levels within the MHS.
- Encouraging enrollment of the eligible population to an MTF to improve mammography rates overall.
- Setting goals for the MHS that include attaining similar mammography rates for all women ages 52 through 69.

Study Limitation

- The NQMP 2001 study was conducted using modified HEDIS Technical Specifications. Therefore, results from the 2001 study are not comparable to 2002 MTF enrollee rates.

References

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